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THE

HAL-SAFLIENI
PREHISTORIC HYPOGEUM

AT

CASAL PAULA, MALTA.

FIRST REPORT

BY

T. ZAMMIT, M.D.

CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM.

MALTA
1910.

From H. W. Thomas

1958.

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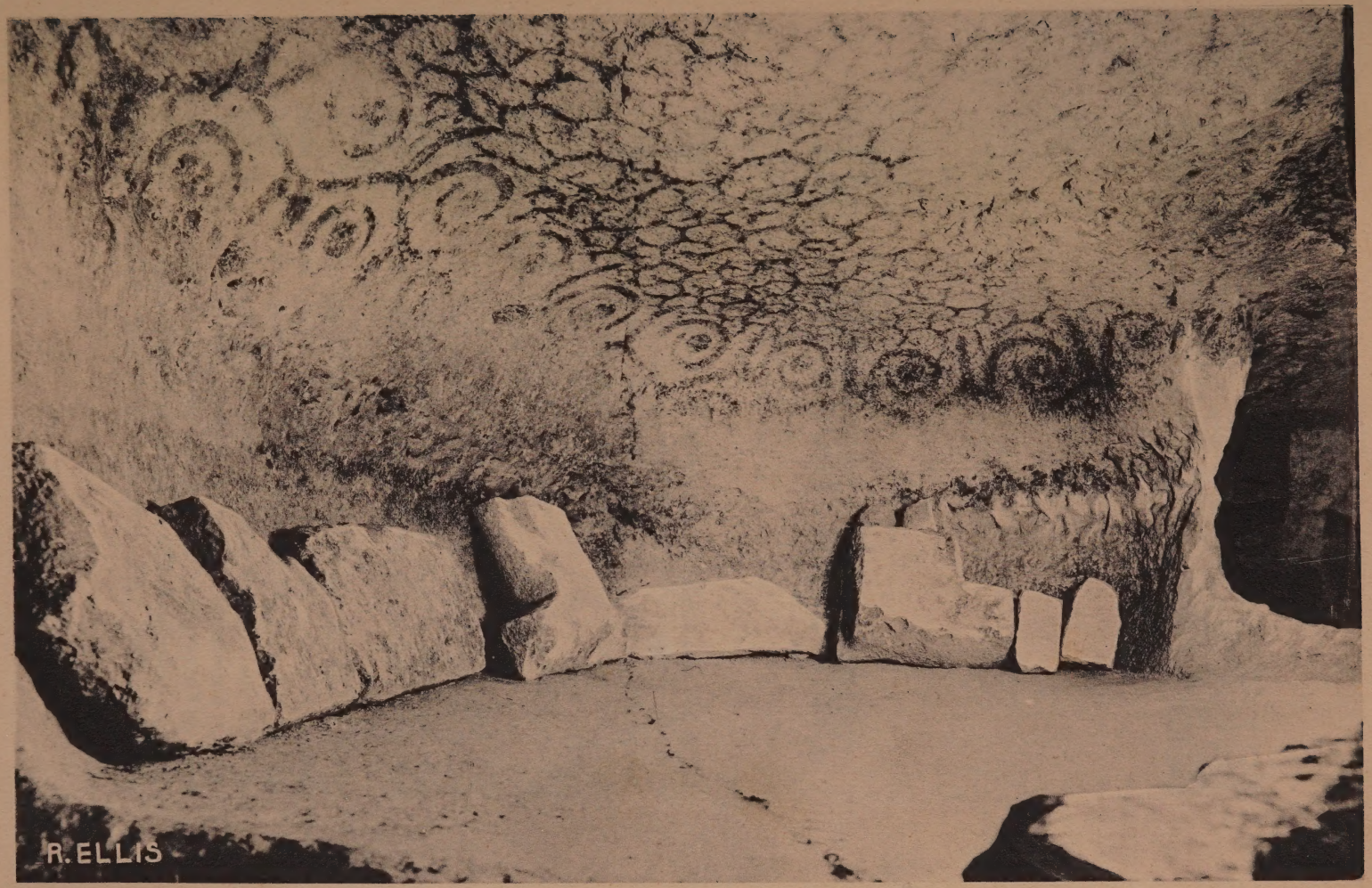


Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum – Casal Paula – Malta
(Painted ceiling)

The Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum.

THIS hypogeum, discovered accidentally in 1902, takes its name from the locality under which it lies, called Hal-Saflieni. The name, however, has been wrongly applied to the place, as Hal-Saflieni means the low-lying village (from *Hal* village or centre and *Saflieni* low-lying) whereas the locality is on the top of the hill.

The hill faces to the West another one called *Tal Horr* occupied by the Catholic Cemetery. The exact locality of the hypogeum is to the North West of the village of Tarxien, at a point where it merges into the village of Paula.

Casal Paula, called by the Maltese "*Rahal Gdid*", was a modest cluster of houses in 1626 when its name was officially given to it by Grand Master Fr. Antonio de Paule, or Paula, as he was known in Malta. The Grand Master had a summer residence there, now so modified as to be no longer recognizable. The Grand Masters Perellos and Caraffa had also a summer residence in this village. The official name

Paula was never adopted by the people, who always preferred to call it *Rahal Gdid* (new village). It has grown into a large village quite recently, when the new Naval Docks, on its North Eastern shores, attracted towards it an army of labourers.

The ground in which the hypogeum is cut was covered with cultivated fields, up to a few years ago, and the existence of caves was not suspected in modern times.

At the time of the Order caves must have been known to exist in that neighbourhood, as we read that the summer house of Grand Master Paula (1623-36) was built on the land called *Tal Gherien* (of the caves).

Discovery of the hypogeum.

In 1902 two large blocks of houses were built in this locality, and whilst cutting the rock for a water tank the workmen broke into a large cave. The owner kept the news to himself and used the catacombs as a handy dumping ground for stones and debris, to save the expense of carting away the useless material. When the houses were ready, the owner in a casual way, informed some Government officials of the existence of the hypogeum.

The place was visited, but being full of rubbish and swamped with water, no special importance was at first attached to it. The Government however appointed a Committee to report upon the discovery, and in 1903, the place became public property.

Clearing of the caves.

By this time the antiquities of these Islands had been placed under the care of the Committee of Management of the Valletta Museum who, at their meeting of the 6th November 1903, entrusted the late Father E. Magri S. J., a member of the Committee,

with the exploration of the hypogeum. A shaft was sunk and the place was entered about 30 feet below the surface of the road.

Through this shaft the dumped rubbish and the old material were brought up to be examined. The material thrown in by the builders was speedily removed, but below, that a layer of dark, damp deposit was found which required careful handling, being mixed with bones and fragments of pottery. The damp earth brought up in baskets was dried and then carefully sifted before it was carted away and disposed of. This explains the slow progress of the work conducted by Father Magri who found the dampness of the soil to interfere seriously with the exploration.

The bones were placed in a heap and the fragments of pottery and the objects met with were carefully preserved for further study.

The material was brought up under the superintendence of a foreman who had the material to be cleared away pointed out to him daily.

When all the material was removed a plan was made by the officials of the Public Works Department, with sections and sketches, to help in the drawing up of the report.

Very unfortunately, Father Magri who had to leave the Island, died at Susa (28th March 1907) before drawing up any report on the excavations, thus carrying with him to the grave the personal observations he had made during the work. His note book containing the details of the excavation was in fact never recovered.

The Curator of the Museum was then entrusted with the clearing of the place which, in its lower parts, was still full of water. The water was very difficult to get rid of. It found its way to the hypogeum from the surface of the rock above, from the streets, which at the

time had no proper drainage, from the yards of the overlying houses and in part from the tanks which were not water tight or which overflowed in winter. The water further oozed out of the rock and flowed freely at some points from crevices and collected in the lower caves.

The water was baled out at first, then a deep shaft was sunk in the hope that a fissure would be met in the white rock.

These means proved insufficient to keep the lower storey free from water and it was only through the careful stopping of fissures through the concreting of the yards overhead and the complete rendering of the tanks of the neighbouring houses, that the place was dried up.

As the ground above was all private property, it was impossible to move freely in the matter and one of the blocks of houses had to be bought by the Government, to render some of the yards imprevious, and to do away with a water tank which was leaking. The place was finally freed from the water which rendered it almost inaccessible to visitors.

The entrance through the shaft in the passage at *Catacombs street* is artificial, the original entrance being at Hal-Saflieni street where large blocks of stone, some of them still standing, were met with whilst lowering the level of the street for sanitary purposes.

Description of the hypogeum.

The hypogeum has an area of about 500 sq. metres and consists of four sets of caves and galleries, cut at different levels, in the white calcareous rock. For a clearer understanding of the place it is far better to describe the same as entered from the artificial passage in Catacomb street, marked *(A)* in the accompanying plan.

Coming down the narrow staircase *(A)*, we enter, at 9 m. below the surface, a short artificial gallery which opens in a low cave, and turning sharply to the right we get into a large bell-shaped cavity *(B)*. This cave 1.83 m. in diameter is partly old and partly new. It was originally one of the side caves of the hypogeum but, rendered with cement and made watertight, it was turned into a water tank by the owner of the house overhead. The rendering was at a later time removed but the workmen had hewn the rock freely to give the cistern the usual bell shape.

When this tank was subsequently done away with, the cave was found to be connected with another one, the central niche of the room *(E)*. It could not be ascertained if this communication between the two small caves was meant, or whether it was the result of the smashing of the partition wall, during the construction of the cistern.

When an artificial entrance to the hypogeum was made in 1903, the stairs at *(A)* ended just behind these caves.

The passage C.

Coming out of the cave *(B)* one lands in the oblong space *(C)*, having a small dolmen-shaped doorway in front, a large cave *(E)* on the left, and a high platform *(V)* on the right. From this platform one easily perceives that the ceiling in front was worked with skill and taste. This is flat, for about 2. 74 m., and a curved cornice, 14 cms. wide, is then cut which springs from the sides of the wide entrance on the platform. 22 cms. below this cornice a second one, 27 cms. thick, ends in a line with the ceiling of the room *(K)*.

The space *(C)* is 5.30 m. long and 2.54 m. wide. It is limited on the northern side by a high wall, but on its southern aspect, it is only marked by a ridge about 61 cms. from the ground.

On the further end of the space (*C*) an oblong cave (*H*) is hewn in the rock. The face of the right wall of this cave is straight but on the left it shows a concave surface 71 cms. deep and 1.67 m. high; at its entrance it is only 1.14 m. high but it deepens to 1.67 m. beyond the entrance.

This cave communicates by means of an opening 1 m. by 46 cms., flush with its ceiling, with the cave at the eastern end of the deep cave (*V*) which is at a lower level.

The entrance to the cave (*H*) is considerably narrowed by a built-up doorway. Two stone pillars of this doorway, 1.34 m. high by 30 cms. wide and 55 cms. thick, sustain a lintel, 1.42 m. long, 22 cms. wide and 53 cms. thick, leaving an entrance 68 cms. wide. This doorway is not constructed to be in symmetry with the cave, of which the right wall is in a line with the middle point of the doorway; to complete the facade, a third pillar was placed at the angle of the ridge in the larger space (*K*).

The oblong space (*C*) is, practically, divided in two by a stone pillar from which two arches spring of almost equal span. This pillar is a monolith and was meant more as an ornament than a support of the roof.

Cave K.

From the oblong space (*C*) one enters a room (*K*) to the south. This is practically hexagonal with roughly hewn floor sloping outwards. This room is 2 m. high at its central part and its ceiling is slightly vaulted and irregular. In front it is pretty well finished, further on it is roughly cut and at the back, near the entrance of the room (*M*), it is flat and well finished again.

The right wall is deeply concave, that on the left is irregular and goes to form a sort of pillar from which

the arched ceilings of this room, that of the space (*C*), and of the room (*M*), spring.

Red paint is extensively used for the decoration of this room. On the archway at the entrance, 14 red discs are painted in three rows. Most of these discs are 25 cms. in diameter and well preserved. Beyond the entrance red paint is seen in blotches, here and there, at irregular intervals.

This room is remarkable for a great number of holes, of various size, drilled in the rock, in different directions. They are slightly funnel shaped, most of them 7.5 cms. deep with a diameter of 2.5 cms. at the surface and about half as large at the bottom. The drilling of these numerous holes was the first step for deepening the cave. Holes appear to have been drilled, and then the rock between them was chipped off with chisels or maces. These holes appear whenever the wall surface is not well finished.

On the right, a quadrangular opening, 1.52 m. wide and 1.72 m. high, leads to a room (*L*) at a lower level. In front there is a circular opening 58 cms. wide, 52 cms. from the ceiling, leading into a pyramidal cave (*K'*) 3 m. deep, with the apex towards the entrance. On the left side the wall is straight, but on the right it is deeply concave. The ceiling is slightly vaulted. The floor of the cave is circular.

Cave L.

The opening on the right leads to the cave (*L*) of which the floor is 1.7 m. below that of the room (*K*). No steps lead to this room which was found full of old material. The room has a pyramidal form with the base at the further end. The left wall is well finished and straight, the right one is curved and smooth for only 1.34 m. above the floor; higher up, it juts out slightly at first, but for fully 61 cms. at the middle of the room, where the ridge grows into an arch. The

edge of this arch forms a kind of cornice 25 cms. wide at its starting point, on the right wall, with a groove above it, which becomes 15 cms. deep, at the back of the room.

In the right wall, 45 cms. above the floor, a window-like opening is found, 61 cms. high, with straight top line, and concave sill slanting outwards. This entrance is 30 cms. deep and beyond it is a cave (*L*1) 3.96 m. long by 2.13 m. wide, at its middle part. The shape of the floor is roughly that of a segment of a circle with the chord along the flat and straight wall at the back;the rest of the wall all around is curved and perfectly finished. The roof is flat, and slopes towards the entrance and the left end of the cave. The height of the cave is 2.69 m. at the N.W. corner, 1.98 m. at the S.E. corner and 1.90 m. at the S.W. corner.

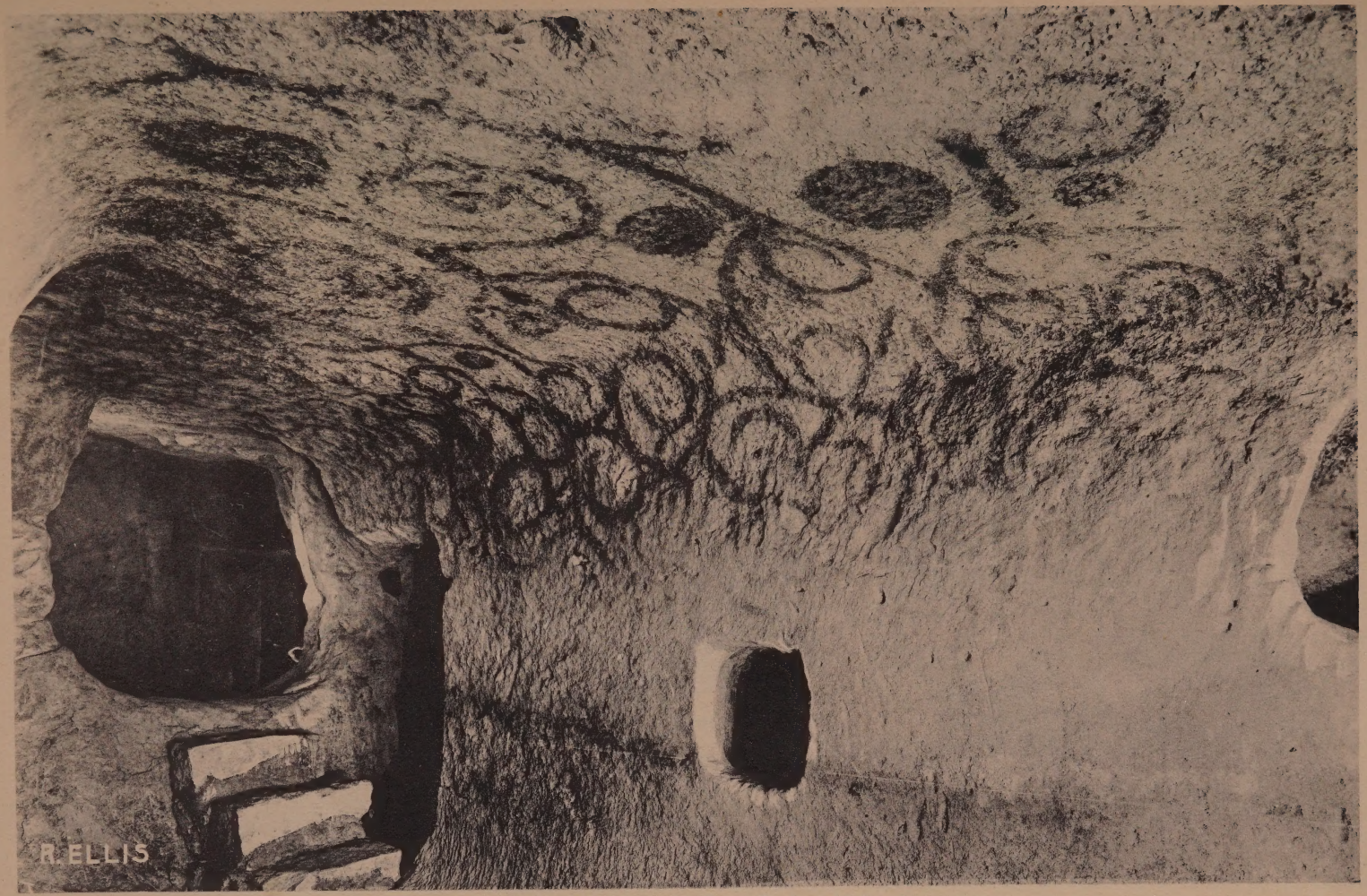
In the back wall of this cave (*L*') is a square entrance (61 x 61 cms.), rounded at the top and with sill sloping sharply inwards. This leads into a small niche (*L*2) with concave walls and roof. At the back it ends in an apse, 15 cms. deep, set in a frame like a Roman arcosolium.

The work of these two caves is of the best and the walls are finely dressed probably rubbed.

The room (*L*) has at its entrance, on the left, a niche (1.72 m. high, 1.52 m. wide and 73 cms. deep), rudely hollowed and not in harmony with the rest of the room.

1.77 m. away from this niche a small cave (*L*^{3}) is cut in the wall with a square entrance and rounded corners. Each side is 50 cms. long, and the sill is 20 cms. deep. The ceiling slopes inwards and joins the wall at the back, forming a delicate curve. The cave, 1.42 m. high, is oval with the base upwards.

1.39 m. from this cave a small ovoid niche, with point upwards,is cut in the left wall at 1.32 m. from the floor. It is 66 cms. high, 63 cm. wide at the base, and 55 cms. deep.



Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum – Casal Paula – Malta

(Large room with painted ceiling)

The niche was possibly intended to receive a statuette, a cone, a pillar, or a similar object.

This room (*L*) is painted with the same red paint observed in other parts of the hypogeum. On the ceiling, at the entrance, is a large disc and on the left two smaller discs, one above the other.

The painting in the room is limited to the ceiling and the left wall, for about 91 cms. On the right, the wall is ornamented for a few feet, but it is irregularly cut, showing that it was broken beyond this point after the painting was done.

On the left wall the ornamentation begins at the entrance and consists of two rows of Archimede's spirals repeated twelve times; the diameter of the spirals vary from 25 to 41 cms.

The ceiling is ornamented with the same type of spirals and in the space left between them, discs of various size are painted. 2.37 m. from the entrance, a system of spirals extends from side to side, repeated at intervals of 81 cms., 81 cms. and 1.29 m.

Neither the niches nor the caves are in any way ornamented, with the exception of the small niche on the left wall, which has three red discs painted on the inside. The painting in this room is the clearest of the whole hypogeum, owing to the fact, that the ceiling has always kept dry.

From the room (*K*) one passes into a cave (*M*) of which the floor is 34 cms. lower than that of the former.

Cave M.

Two ridges, cut at the side of the entrance, show that a pillar stood at each end. The room is oval, 4.88 m. long and about 3.66 m. wide, the floor being remarkably flat. On the right of the entrance and in front, the wall has a deeply concave surface and is roughly

cut for a height of 1.22 m. Above that, it is smooth and well finished, and curves up to the ceiling; this is flat and practically square, with 3.66 m. for each side. On the left side, below the ceiling, the wall is exceptionally well finished and forms, at 1.72 to 2 m. from the floor a cornice 46 cms. high, well defined at both ends, where it rests on two pillars, 76 cms. and 55 cms. wide.

The whole eastern wall is divided, by rock hewn pilasters, into three spaces, 1.22, 1.44, and 1.72 m. wide, respectively, from left to right.

The rock-pillars are well-finished and pitted with small well drilled holes, a decoration met with in the megalithic ruins of Hagiar Kim and Mnaidra. The first pillar from the left has slightly everted ends; it is 45 cms. at the top, 38 cms. at the middle part, and 50 cms. at the base. The right pillar tapers at the base. It is 45 cms. at the top, 38 cms. at the middle part, and only 22 cms at the base.

Between the first and the second pillar an oval cave (*N*) is excavated with a roof sloping backwards and ending in a curved wall surface.

The floor of the cave is elliptical, measuring 3.49m. by 2.33 m. An oval pit is cut in it 1.93 m. deep 2.03 m. long and 1.97 m. wide. The pit is dug vertically for 53 cms. but beyond that it widens considerably.

At the entrance the sill is 25 cms. wide and is deeply grooved to receive a slab, which originally separated the cave from the room (*M*). When the place was discovered only a small portion of this slab was found in the groove, and this was left in situ.

The pitting on the pillar is not limited to the outer surface but continues for 60 cms. inside the cave, on its right wall. High up in the back wall, 1.44 m. from the floor, a triangular window-like opening is seen with rounded edges, 61 cms. high, and with a sill 61 cms. wide and 22 cms. thick.

This opening corresponds to the one described in the room E.

Lower down, a small irregular hole is observed caused by the smashing of the wall at a point where it is very thin.

Beyond the second pillar there is the second space, 1.77 m. high and 94 cms. deep.

In the front wall, 2.33 m. wide, there is a rectangular opening 88 cms. wide and 1.14 m. high of which the right side is broken to the extent of 25 cms.

The right side of the recess is concave and its roof is flat.

This recess is just above a staircase leading to the lower storey and it was originally the mouth of a shaft, through which the lower caves were dug out.

The floor of this recess is consequently artificial and is made of four slabs of stone which form the roof of the staircase.

The first stone, flush with the floor of the cave (*M*), is 1.22 m. long, 83 cms. wide and 22 cms. thick, and is set at 40 cms. from the left wall.

The second stone is 86 cms. long, 20 cms. wide and 10 cms. thick. The third and fourth stones have their further end set in the front wall.

The third stone is 1.16 m. long, 27 cms. wide and 13 cms. thick.

The fourth slab is 1.77 m. long 47 cms. wide and 13 cms. thick. It juts out for 13 cms. in the room, and is 38 cms. above the floor. The proximate side of these two blocks rests on two smaller stones of which one is 73 cms. long, 35 cms. wide and 18 cms. thick, and the other 45, by 22, by 13 cms.

Beyond the second pillar on the right, is the third space (*P*) 1.72 m. wide; this is also a passage that leads to a lower storey and a room (*F*).

The room (*M*) has a striking appearance; it is painted somewhat like the room (*L*), but the bands of paint are thinner and the spirals on the ceiling are not so regular and continuous. The broken lines give to the spirals the appearancee of polygons with sides slightly curved and a diameter of 18 cms.

The wall below the ceiling is ornamented, all round, with two sets of Archimedes' spirals one above the other.

The left side of the room, including the cornice and the pillars, was painted red all over. The colour is clearly visible in corners, but in the middle portion it was washed off by the water which, at a time, leaked abundantly from the cistern above.

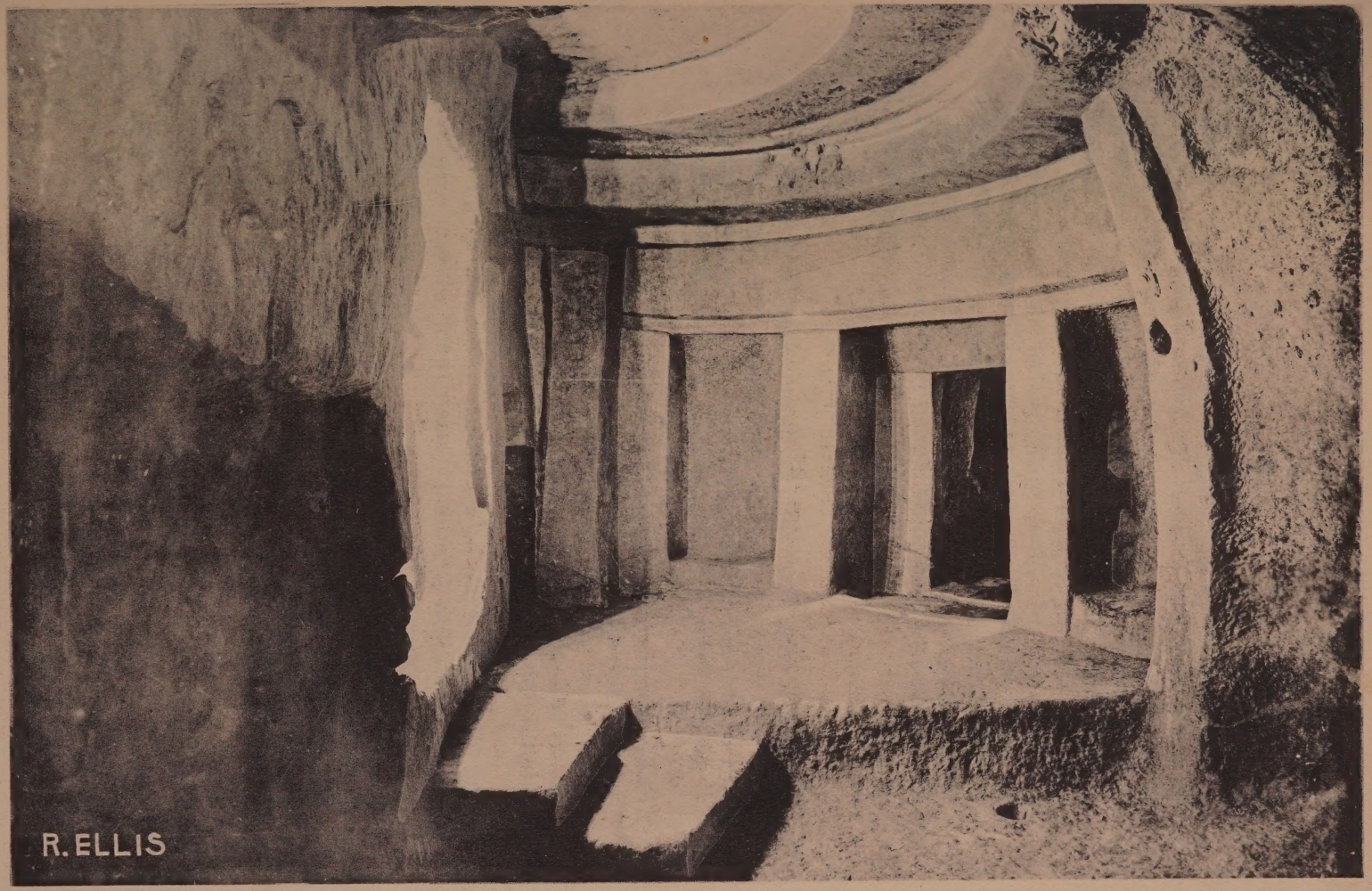
Beyond the room (*M*) and at a level of 68 cms. below its floor, a small passage leads to a room (*F*) and to a lower storey. This passage (*P*) is triangular in shape with two sides concave and the third side, in a line with the steps, quite straight.

The height of the passage is 2.74 m; the ceiling slopes upwards and forms an angle with the flat roof of the recess (*F*). The wall facing the stairs is concave and, at a height of 2 m. from the floor, it is hollowed so as to preserve the fine curve of the room (*F*).

The front wall, in which the stair is dug, is straight but at a height of 94 cms. from the floor it is cut for a depth of 40 cms. and a height of 1.11 m. The resulting hollow space was filled up by a large stone slab, found broken at the entrance of the stairs.

In front of the passage (*P*) is an inner room or recess of a triangular form. (*F*)

It is probable that the triangular recess was screened from the stairs by a wooden partition or a curtain extending from the left jamb of the door to a pillar on the opposite wall. This conjecture is based on the position of some holes cut in the wall and in the



Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum – Casal Paula – Malta
(innermost room)

floor, in which beams appear to have been fixed. Two of the holes, in the left jamb of the door, are oval (10 × 7 cms.) and connected together as if to allow the passage of a rope. Another round hole, 8 cms. in diameter, is dug in the floor of the second step and further on, always on the same line, a larger one (10 cms. diameter) nearer to the front wall. In the wall an other large hole is cut (12 cms. in diameter and 10 cms. deep) at a height of 1.14 m. from the floor. A partition fixed at this point would easily screen the innermost room from people who had to pass to the lower storey.

Room F.

The elaborate curve of the roof ceases sharply when it gets in a line with the steps above this supposed partition. A very remarkable feature of this dainty recess is the absence of red paint which is visible all over the hypogeum.

The main arrangement consists of a central doorway with two shallow side niches, the whole surmounted by cornices overlapping each other to form a sort of dome, which juts out 1.27 m. beyond the line of the wall. Beyond this the ceiling runs dead flat for 1.14 m. to the opposite wall.

The whole front curves up to meet the dome but it also curves lengthwise forming a well defined segment of a circle.

In the centre is a quadrangular doorway with two well finished jambs, 37 cms. wide. At each side a deeply curved, barrel shaped niche is cut, 63 cms. wide, 20 cms. deep at the top, and 37 cms. at the base.

The floor of the niches is flat as if to receive a pillar or a similar object.

Four pillars or jambs limit the doorway and two niches at the sides, and two other pillars complete the pretty facade.

The central doorway, 1.52 m. high and 1.06 m. wide, in line with the wall, widens up to 1.37 m. at the depth of 78 cms. All the angles of the jambs, lintels and pillars are rounded off with great care.

Cave G

This doorway leads to an innermost cave (3.50 m. long, 2 m. wide and 2.51 m. high), which might well have been a hiding place for treasure. The floor is 91 cms. below the door sill. The cave is oval in shape and its roof is flat. The front wall is concave and at a height of 1.27 m. from the floor a niche (81 cms. deep and 1.64 m. wide) is cut, limited by two jambs 25 cms. thick. It appears that this niche was originally not wider than 1.06 m., as the lower end of a pillar, symmetrical with the right jamb, is still visible and was probably destroyed when the niche was widened. This niche is not well finished as the rest of the cave.

A vertical ridge of the rock is seen high up in the front wall of this niche, through which a hole is bored. Below the ridge, the floor of the niche has a circular depression 30 cms. in diameter and 61 cms. deep. This could well be meant for an object with cylindrical base supported by a rope passed through the hole in the ridge above. (Dr. Ashby's opinion)

On the left of this cave another niche was being excavated but the work was never brought to an end.

Standing in this cave and looking outwards one is struck by the finishing of the door frame. The jambs and lintel are slender and very well shaped. At one third of its length the right jamb is perforated by a hole 5 cms. in diameter and the left jamb, at a corresponding height, has a similar hole and another one 10 cms. above it.

The first impression one receives is that the entrance was closed by a door locked from the inside

but as no change of air can be obtained in this cave the explanation cannot be accepted.

Cave F1

Coming out of the cave *(G)* two symmetrical openings are observed flanking the doorway in front. On the left is the entrance to the lower storey and on the right is the entrance to a small cave, about 91 cms. below the floor of the recess *(F)*.

This cave is oval in shape but not very regular, it has flat roof and deeply concave walls. It is 2 m. high, 2.94 m. long and 2.13 m. wide. Its wall corresponding to the room *(E)* is broken, but when the niche was used it was entered only from the recess *(F)*.

From this small room *(F')* we can now walk out into the large room *(E)* through the broken wall.

Main hall E

What may be called the main hall *(E)* facing the passage *(D)* is a practically circular space 3 m. high and about 4.57 m. wide by some 4.88 m. long. On the left, looking from the passage *(D)*, the wall is concave both on the perpendicular and on the horizontal planes. A cornice 22 cms. wide runs along the wall and divides it into practically two equal portions.

The upper portion is symmetrically divided by jambs into three niches, of which the central one opens into a slightly oval cave, 2 m. wide 1.83 m. deep and 1.60 m. wide. The central niche, 1.27 m. high, tapers slightly upwards with a base of 93 cms. and a lintel of 76 cms. After a depth of 68 cms. the opening is reduced to 66 cms. by 78 cms.

The other niches are 1.32 m. high and 61 cms. wide at the extremities; the jambs are slightly curved and their back wall has the appearance of a split

barrel deeply concave. Below the cornice three other deep niches are cut but they are not in symmetry with those above them.

One gets the impression that these lower niches were cut at a later date with less care than it was bestowed on the higher set.

At the extreme left the niche is practically in a line with the upper one; it has an opening 76 cms. high and an average width of 50 cms. being 5 cms. wider at its upper portion. It is cut at 45 cms. from the floor.

The two other niches are practically equal in shape and size; their base, in a line with the floor, is about 15 cms. wider than the upper part which is 61 cms. across.

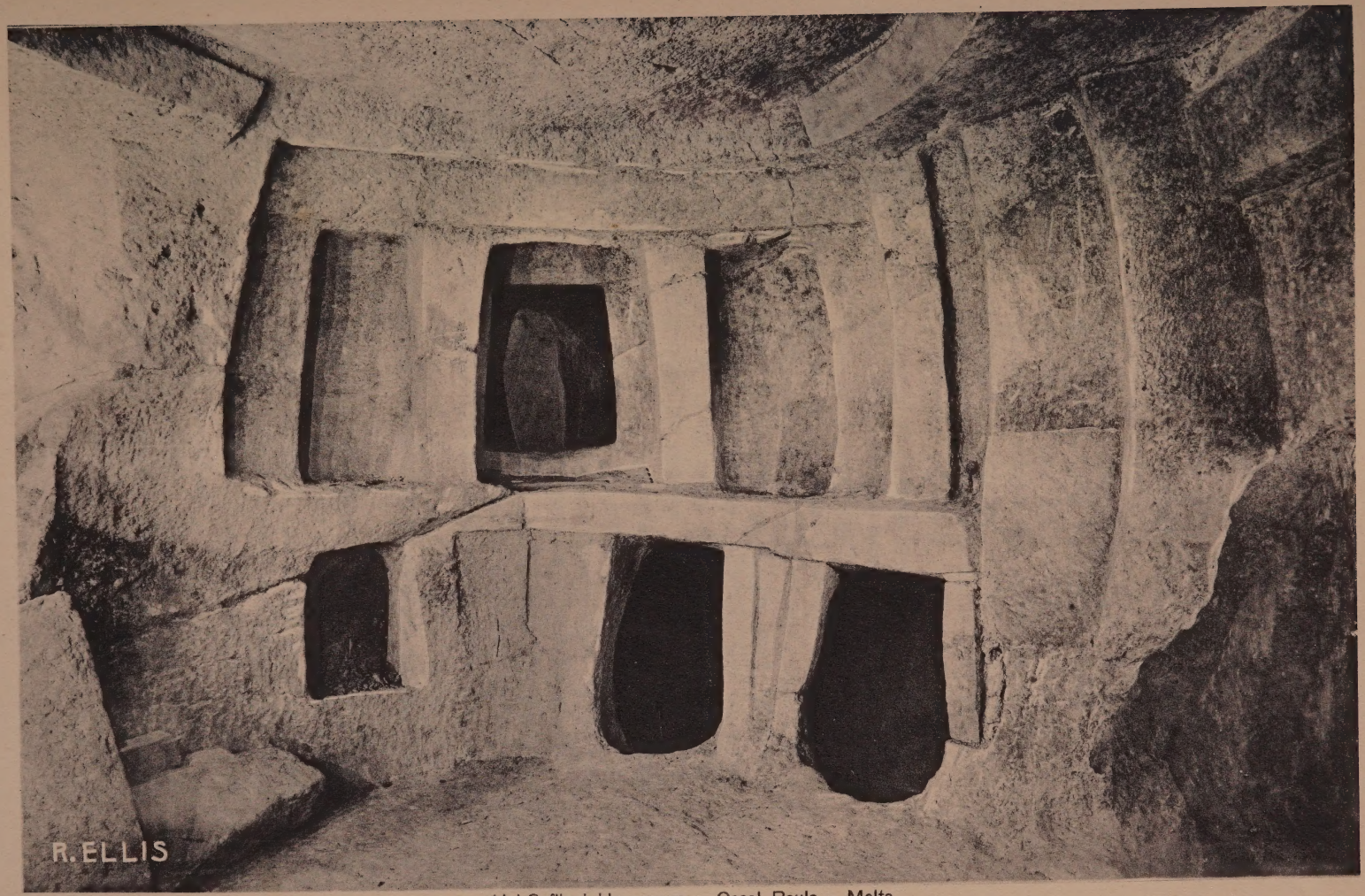
The central niche is 1 m. away from that on the left and only 55 cms. from that on the right, hence the marked asymmetry.

The left corner of the room is now broken and leads into a small cave (*F'*) but originally the wall was rounded off like the opposite corner and the cave, (*F'*) was only accessible from the inner room (*F*).

The opposite wall on the right is also concave and has two openings cut in it, with jambs and lintels in bold relief.

On the further end of the wall the opening is 86 cms. from the ground; it is rectangular and practically square being 1 m. high and 1.17 m. at the base tapering upwards to 91 cms. The left jamb of this window is broken and the opening, consequently, appears wider. This leads into a recess of the room at the back (*M*), but it was never intended for a doorway.

The other opening is smaller and fully 1.57 m. from the ground. It has the jambs inclined upwards and whilst at the base they are 1.52 m. apart they are not more than 1.14 m. under the lintel.



Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum – Casal Paula – Malta
(main room – showing niches)

The area of this window is reduced by a sort of frame cut in the rock into a roughly semicircular aperture with a radius of 45 cms.

This window opens on the inner side in the oval recess adjoining the room (*M*) and just under it, is the oval pit already described. The sill of the window appears to be smoothed down by constant friction. The whole arrangement gives one an impression that through this opening something was habitually thrown from the room *(E)* into the pit (*N*).

The third or front side of this room, more concave than the other two sides, is the best finished of the three. Its roof ends in a beautifully cut cornice with bevelled edge and in it a central doorway and two side niches are accurately cut. The rectangular doorway is at the centre. It is 1.62 m. high and 96 cms. wide; at its upper portion it tapers slightly, the base being 12 cms. wider. It is 92 cms. deep and leads into the inner chamber *(F)* by means of two steps.

The side niches are symmetrical and well finished. They are 1.57 m. high and 50 cms. wide at the extremities. The three openings are ornamented with the usual jambs and lintels very neatly cut and finished.

The floor of the room (*E*) is 81 cms. below this doorway and therefore some kind of step had to be provided to allow a passage at this point into the cave beyond.

The entrance to this room is oval, 2.74 m. wide and 1.52 m. high.

A bevelled cornice traces the upper limits of the wall, both at the back and in front. The two cornices do not coincide at their point of meeting and the curve they trace is, therefore, not a continuous one.

The ceiling of the room, beyond the cornices, is dead flat and carefully finished.

It appears that this large aperture was originally reduced to a small and central doorway, by means of

four large stone pillars which are now lying on the floor of the room. The dimensions and the shape of these stones render this hypothesis a very probable one.

This doorway, would have stood at nearly the same height as the opposite one, for a ridge is cut in the rock at a corresponding height.

The room must have looked very pretty and imposing when at its best. It was all painted a deep red, and the paint is still visible in corners and recesses.

On the right wall, between the two windows, drawings of a geometrical pattern can still be made out. Three rows of painted squares, alternately black and white, can be made out below the ceiling, and under the lower squares, a red scroll made of spiral lines is still visible in a subdued light.

Among the debris in this room, 7 stone balls of various size were found, and 4 small cylindrical pillars. Two of the balls are 50 cms. in diameter and the others about 25 cms. The pillars vary from a height of 45 to that of 25 cms. and are between 25 to 20 cms. in diameter. The longest one is regular in shape but the others are not so well finished.

The Stairs.

Going back to the room (*F*) through the cave (*F'*) one finds to his right the passage to the lower storey. At a distance of 1.06 m. from the back wall of the passage (*P*), a step is cut in the floor 7 cms. high, parallel to the entrance in front.

The second step, cut partly in the floor, is 33 cms. high. At a depth of 30 cms. the step is made up of five stones placed on edge, the left portion however is cut in the rock.

The plastering between these stones is modern, made to bind together the stones which appeared loose.

The third step is made of one block of stone 1.47m. long, now broken in two. It is 10 to 15 cms. high and 30 cms. wide in its middle part, tapering slightly at the ends. It rests on 3 small stones set in a bed made of pounded stone.

The fourth step is made of one block of stone 1.44 m. long, 33 cms. wide, in the middle part, which slightly tapers at both ends. It is 1.75 m. high and rests on small stones.

The fifth step is made of one whole block 1.11 m. long, 35 cms. wide on the right and 15 cms. on the left It is 12 cms. high. The rest of the step, which is 20 cms. high, is made of beaten earth.

This step is 1.57 m. long at the back and only 1.11 m. in front, the space being reduced by a pillar at each side cut in the rock. These two pillars are 55 cms. high, 25 cms. wide at the back and 12 cms. in front, and 54 cms. thick.

The sixth step is made of one block of stone between the two pillars just mentioned. It is 1.16 m. long, 42 cms. thick and 47 cms. high, at its middle portion. The step is turned somewhat to the right.

The seventh step is made of a large block of stone. and the two pillars mentioned rest on its ends. On these bases two stone uprights stood originally to reduce the entrance. One of these stone pillars, 1.88 m. long, found close by, fits exactly one of the bases. The step is 2 m. long, 17 cms. high, 33 cms. wide at the left end, and only 15 cms. at the right.

The eight step, the last one, is made of a large block of stone 2.81 long, slightly curved in front; the right end is 66 cms. wide and the left 53 cms. At its middle part, the width is 61 cms. and the thickness 17 cms.

Staircase.

The roof of the staircase is made of the slabs forming the floor of the recess described in connection with the room (*M*). The shaft is cylindrical for about 1 m. and then it expands into a vault divided into two portions by a pillar cut in the wall, in front of the flight of stairs. This pillar is 50 cms. thick everted at the top, where it measures 48 cms. across; at its middle it is only 38 cms. wide.

The space beyond the stair is 3.35 m. from ceiling to floor.

A wooden floor is now adapted at the level of the last step to make the passage to the inner rooms possible. Beyond the steps the deep space (*Q* and *Q'*) was found full of old material which constituted a flooring and a passage to the inner space, filled up in the same manner.

The space opposite the stairs (*Q* and *Q'*) is divided into two portions by a pillar hewn in the rock, the left part (*Q'*) being 1.80 m. and the right one (*Q*) 2.81 m. wide.

In the wall of the right space (*Q*) is a square opening, 62 cms. per side at 61 cm. below the ceiling.

This opening with slightly concave sides, leads into a cave (*Q2*) of which the floor is distincly kidney-shaped with a well marked concavity at the back and a slight one in front. This cave is 2.33 m. long and 1.22 wide, in the middle part, and 1.11 m. high. The front wall forms a ridge 10 cms. thick ending at the window sill.

Turning sharply to the right, we come in front of a doorway leading to an inner cave. The threshold is 1.47 m. above the floor of the room and owing to the curvature of the walls it has a triangular shape with the base on the left side. This facade is very elaborate and is cut to represent two pillars spanned by a lintel of the practically uniform thickness of 30 cms., with a re-

Hal-Saflieni Hypogeum – Casal Paula – Malta
(passage in lower storey)

lief of about 5 cms. The jambs are slightly curved with rounded edges and the lintel is decidedly curved with a convex lower surface, as if it is was meant to represent a pliable material bent under a superincumbent weight. The effect of this curve is very pleasing to the eye. (See accompanying photo No.)

The space between the jambs is 1.54 m. and the height of the entrance is 1.55 m.

This space is reduced to a height of 1.37 m. and a width of 1.04 m. by another pair of jambs and another lintel cut in the rock at a depth of 15 cms., in reduced proportions. The inner jambs slightly converge upwards and are slightly concave, making the doorway barrels-haped.

The whole facade and the rest of the room were originally painted red. The two lintels were further ornamented with painted red discs. The discs on the innermost lintel are very clear and 12 of them can be made out; those on the outer one have almost faded away.

Cave R.

This doorway leads to an irregularly quadrilateral space (*R*) with the back wall quite flat and the other wall surfaces decidedly concave. This cave is 3.25 m. long, 2.15 m. wide at the back, and 1.67 m. in front. The heigt at the middle of the room is 3.30 m. from ceiling to floor. The doorway is ornamented, on the inside, with well shaped jambs and lintel, but it is not cut in the middle of the wall.

On the left wall of this cave is a large opening 1.69 wide and 1.83 high. This opening is limited above by the roof of the cave (*R*) and below by a thin ridge. Beyond this opening is a cave(*S*) ovoid in shape, but with irregular walls. 2.25 m. long, 2.03 m. wide and 4.57 m. high. The right wall is flat and straight, but the rest of the cave is concave all round. In the back

wall, a pillar is cut 81 cms. wide, at its middle portion, and wider at the top. On the left of this pillar a triangular recess *(S')* appears divided from the main cave by a ridge of stone 91 cms. high and 7 cm. thick.

Passage T

On the right of the room *(R)* and 1.27 m. beyond the entrance, another doorway opens between two rock-cut pillars. This door-way, 1.37 m. wide and 1.83 m. high, has no lintel, the ceiling of the room *(R)* being continuous with that of the passage *(T)*.

The room *(R)* was originally painted red all over though the red is now only visible in corners and in patches laid in thick bands.

Through the doorway, on the right, we pass into the passage *(T)* 2.61 m. long, 1.67 m. wide, and 3.84 high, the doorsill being 1.37 m. above the floor.

On the left side, the wall at the entrance merges in a rounded pillar beyond which is a recess 76 cms. deep and 1,37 m. wide at the entrance; its back wall is flat but the right side is deeply concave. The entrance to this recess ends with the ceiling above and is limited below by a convex stone ridge 10 cms. thick, at 66 cms. above the floor.

The right side of the passage *(T)* corresponds to the back of the stairs and a gap existed before the stairs were constructed. This gap was filled up by five upright slabs of stone, about 1 metre high, 33 cms. wide and about 8 cms. thick. The two middle slabs are new as the old ones were found knocked out when the place was cleaned.

These slabs stand on a large block of stone 1.27m. long, 33 cms. wide, and 1.75 m. thick, placed lengthwise. Its right end is set into a cutting in the wall and the free end rests on another upright 1.98 m. long, 45 cms. wide and 15 cms. thick, standing on the floor of the passage.

The back of the passage is limited by a concave stone ridge 10 cms. thick, with the convexity protruding in the passage, 76 cms. above the floor.

The passage was originally painted red and on the right walling the paint is not laid evenly but in parallel horizontal bands, of which four are clearly visible in two places.

Cave U

Beyond the stone ridge, at the back of the passage, the innermost cave (*U*) is reached. This has a flat wall on the right and a deeply curved surface on the left. The left wall is bell-shaped and the wall at the back is divided in two parts by a rock-cut pillar, 91 cms. wide narrowing below, to about 28 cms. This pillar ends abruptly at 1.34 m. above the floor.

The inner most room is 4.42 m. high 3.81 m. long and 3.42 m. wide.

Four caves are cut in the rock below the floor, one on each side and two at the back, with their openings on a level with the floor.

The entrance to the cave (*U*1) in the left wall has concave sides, 68 cms. high, 55 cms. wide at the middle, and 35 cms. at the base; the cave beyond, has its ceiling flush with the top of the entrance but at the back, it curves rapidly to form the back wall. The floor is oval, 1.83 cms. long and 1.67 m. wide and the height of the cave is 1.67 m. The walls are well finished and all the lines are perfect.

The left cave (*U*2) at the back has a circular floor which extends under the entrance. It has a diameter of 1.83 m. The cave has a flat ceiling and the sides are concave and barrel-shaped. The entrance, flush with the floor, is 66 cms. high and 5 cms. wide, the wall in front being 25 cms. thick.

The third cave, (*U*3) on the front and a little to the right, would also be circular but for its right wall, which

is quite straight. It is 1.67 m. deep, 1.37 m. wide and 1.42 m. high. The entrance is 55 cms. wide and 68 cms. high, limited at the base by the floor of the room and at the upper part by the ceiling of the cave.

The fourth cave (*U*4), dug out on the right, has an elliptical floor, 1.83 m. long and 1.67 m. wide. The ceiling is flat and curves at the sides. It is 1,67 m. high and the dimensions of the entrance are identical with those of the third cave.

Nothing was found in these caves, but water which oozed out of the porous rock or found its way from the upper storeys.

The cave (*U*) was all painted red, originally, and the paint is visible in patches, along parts of the walls. A quadrangular stone, 61 cms. by 55 cms. and 15 cms. at its thickest part, was found at the bottom of the cave. This slab does not however fit any of the four apertures, as at first sight it would seem to do.

Plattorm V

Returning to the upper storey and passing through the rooms *M* and *K* we come to the space (*C*) and to the platform (*V*) at a height of about 1.5 m. from the floor of the passage (*C*).

It surely looks strange that no steps, or anything that could serve their purpose, has been found at this point; yet this is the only passage that leads to the main part of the hypogeum. Wooden steps were probably used which must have perished. Ascending up the modern steps, one finds himself on a flat platform (*V*) about 2.5 m. by 1.5 m. topped by an archway cut in the rock 2.25 m. wide and 4.88 m. high. This entrance is reduced to 1.40 m. by two stone-pillars standing one on each side. Over these, a third large block probably stood once, to make a regular doorway.

In front of the space (*V*) a passage leads to the original entrance to the hypogeum. Up to 1908 this

entrance was blocked by a loose rock once the roof of a cave which gave way and tumbled down.

To the right of the space (*V*), looking towards the hypogeum, we find a large rock-pillar 1.70 m. high, 61 cms. wide and 40 cms. thick, somewhat irregularly shaped and making an acute angle with the line of the entrance. This pillar forms part of the front wall of a triangular cave (*V*1). This cave is 1.27 m. wide but the pillar reduces its entrance to 61 cms.

Cave V1

This cave or room (*V*1) 4.11 m. long, has a floor made of beaten soil 15 cms. higher than the floor of the platform (*V*).

The width of the cave narrows inside to 1.47 m. at a depth of 1.22 m. and to 1.20 m. at the back, where the ceiling curves down into the back wall.

In the right wall an opening is found 98 cms. high, 76 m. wide at the base, and 37 cms. deep. This opening is arched and well cut and leads into a large cave (*Z*).

On the left side of the room (*V*1) a similar but larger opening leads into the cave (*H*) at a lower level.

Coming out of this room (*V*1) we find in front, a kind of corridor ending in a recess. A large block of stone, 1.22 m. long, 76 cms. high and 4 cms. thick, lies across this space which it divides in two parts (*V*2) and (*V*3).

Space V2

This space (*V*2) is limited in front by a pillar standing at the entrance on the left.

Beyond this pillar is an oval cistern about 1.52 m. deep, and 1.38 m. wide, covered by two stone slabs which fit so well as to appear to be but one slab broken

at the middle part. At its centre is a circular opening, 37 cms. wide, covered by a round stone trough 45 cms. in diameter.

The two slabs form the flooring of the right half of the space. The left portion is formed by a ridge of the rock which helps to support the block of stone across the cave.

Space V_3

Beyond this block of stone is a space (V_3) 3.88 m. long and 98 cms. wide with the roof sloping down to 1.22m. from the floor at the back.

This space (V_3) is roughly cut and one can reach it only through an opening 61 cms. high and 6 cms. wide, between the block of stone and the floor.

Returning to the platform (V) we find beyond the front pillar, a large oval room or cave *(Z)* dug out with an arched opening about 2 m. wide.

Cave Z

This cave is 1.37 m. below the level of the platform and has a flat wall on the left. It is 4.88 m. long and 3.05 m. wide with an average height of 2.2 m.

3 steps cut in the rock lead down to the cave but do not reach the flooring.

On the right of the entrance the floor has a circular depression, 30 cms. deep and 1.22 m, in diameter.

On the left wall a window is seen which is cut flush with the floor of the room *(V_1)*.

Beyond the entrance on the right the wall is convex, and at a height of 1.37 m. from the floor it opens in a circular cistern, 91 cms. in diamer and 68 cms. deep. The wall between the cistern and the cave is less than 1 cm. thick which shows the extreme care taken to dig it out.

From the platform V, turning to the right, we enter a series of caves *W* and *X*. The entrance is 3.05 m. wide and 2.13 m. high in the middle, but is reduced to 1.22 m. by two stone pillars standing one on each side. The right pillar is 1.80 m. high, 47 cms. wide and 25 cms. thick; the left one is 1.80 m. high, 68 cms. wide and 30 cms. thick. A third block of stone was once laid across to form a doorway; of this, however, only the fragments remain.

Beyond the pillars, the rock is cut in the shape of a cornice 55 cms. thick, which reduces the height of the cave to 1.57 m.

Room W

This room (*W*) is oblong and beyond the pillars it turns sharply to the right. It is 4.57 m. long irregularly cut, and about 3 m. wide at its middle part.

In the left wall of the cave (*W*), just behind the left pillar at the entrance, an arched opening is seen about 7 cms. high, 61 cms. wide at the base, and about 1 m. deep, flush with the floor. The opening widens inwards and leads into a large cave very regularly cut.

This cave (*Y*) is 2.28 m. high and its floor is 1.07 m. below that of the cave (*W*). It is 3.66 m. long and 2.6 m. wide, with flat walls and flat ceiling sloping inwards for about 6 cms.

The cave or room (*W*) narrows at its further end where an opening, 1.30 m. wide and 1.52 m. high, leads into a practically circular room (*X*) 2.5 m. in diameter and 1.83 m. high. At the sides, it curves down to meet the walls which are deeply concave.

Cave X

On the left of the cave (*X*), just beyond the entrance and at a height of 45 cms. from the floor, is a cave with an arched entrance, 61 cms. high and 55 cms. wide. The cave is oval, 91 cms. wide and 1.37 m. long with a depth of 1.12 m.

At a distance of 68 cms. from the entrance of this cave, the arched opening of another cave is seen at 1 m. from the floor. This opening is blocked with stones and mortar from the inside, being connected with a cistern of a house close by.

At the back of the room (*X*) is a conical cave, 1.98 m. deep and 1.52 m. wide in front. It is 1.37 m. high and opens at a height of 91 cms. from the floor.

On the right we find two caves dug in the wall. The one further from the entrance has no proper entrance as the front wall is smashed in. At a height of 91 cms. from the floor the wall, 17 cms. thick below the original entrance, is still preserved. Behind this the cave is dug forming a kind of trough with an elliptical section, 1.22 m. long, 91 cms. wide and 61 cms. deep.

Nearer to the entrance, a small round cave (diameter 91 cms.) is neatly cut 61 cms. above the flooring. The aperture is arched and is 61 cms. high and 47 cms. wide at the base.

In the room (*X*) we find, lying about, four large slabs, one stone pillar and a globular stone somewhat flattened, with a diameter of about 45 cms.

Coming out of the caves *X* and *W*, we come in front of an entrance which is 1.5 m. wide and 1.4 m. above the floor of the platform (*V*).

When the rock and the debris that blocked this entrance were removed, a whole series of caves, most of them roofless, were found and subsequently cleared.

The hypogeum extends northwards beyond this point; how further however it is not easy to say, when so many houses are built overhead and when a public street was made to pass through this spot.

The original entrance is not far from this group of caves, and beyond them, to the right, the floor is observed to rise steadily and approach the surface of the street.

The set of caves, here, are arranged in a circle and the walls separating the same are in part cut in the rock and in part built up of huge blocks of stone.

Two other caves, still full of old deposit, have been found lately extending under the houses to the north and these will be cleared in due time.

The Entrance

The entrance to the hypogeum was found to face west and the passage from the surface to the hypogeum was an incline a few metres long.

The first caves were rather small but high and well cut, but the best one of all, which has the appearance of a sanctuary, is in the innermost part of the hypogeum two storeys below the first set of caves.

It is very important to note that the entrance is not cut in the face of the hill but dug on the very top of it, so that it is to be presumed that the hypogeum did not originate from a natural cavern, subsequently enlarged and extended, but was dug out purposely in the rock.

The work must have taken a good number of years to complete.

The top of the hill

We have also direct proofs that the top of the hill in which the hypogeum is cut was occupied by a set of megalithic buildings, possibly a neolithic village.

Huge blocks of stones, well dressed and arranged in the way common to all our megalithic buildings, were found in the public road, just outside the hypogeum entrance, and in one of the ground floor rooms of a house, megalithic ruins, still in situ, can be seen to this day. Unfortunately, the ruins in the road cannot be shown, but plans and photos of the same were made when the road was opened a few months ago.

The main feature of the blocks, found outside the hypogeum, was a number of window-like openings cut in stone slabs such as are met with at Mnaidra and Hagiar Kîm.

The entrance to the hypogeum was surely through one of those square stone slab, which is still standing at the mouth of the last cave under the front wall of one of the houses.

The architecture.

The impression one gets, on first entering the hypogeum, is quite awe inspiring, the dim lamplight revealing the intricacy of caves and galleries and the quaint lines of the extraordinary architecture. An air of profound mystery pervades the place and one is inclined to stop and get a general view of the honeycombed walls before he undertakes to observe the detail of the various caves and passages. When the eye gets accustomed to the half light, the curious style of architecture is at once noticed.

All the doorways are cut or constructed in imitation of dolmens and the image of the Hagiar Kim ruins, at Krendi, is vividly recalled.

The doorways which are cut and carved in the solid rock show constantly two jambs supporting a lintel. This is the predominant feature of the whole place. Whenever the passage between one space and another is too wide, it is narrowed by these doorways

which are raised more as an ornament than a necessity.

A similar arrangement is observed in the passage to the lower storey, where the wide entrance was narrowed to a small doorway by large flat stones which interlocked very closely.

This dolmen arrangement is developed into a perfect style of architecture in the two innermost rooms which are more elaborate than all the others. (*see photo*)

The stone uprights are usually neatly curved and finished and the lintels extend into a band which forms a kind of cornice. These stone cornices are bevelled and smoothed, and in some places daintily pitted with small holes, just as are found at Hagiar Kim, Mnaidra and Gigantiia.

The two main chambers have overlapping cornices which give the appearance of a dome, though the roof is perfectly flat and smooth.

Under the cornices, a narrow gutter is cut which improves the appearance of the cornice and at the same time catches any drops of water that may form on the ceiling.

From the general appearance of the hypogeum one is inclined to think that some of the caves and galleries were used as dwelling places, and it the innermost part of the hypogeum was destined for some kind of worship, another part of it was surely used to bury the dead.

The human bones found disjointed and confusedly massed might also point out to the costume, prevalent in neolithic ages, of scraping the dead bodies off their soft parts, before their final burial. The pottery found is of an archaic type and is certainly of the time of the first occupants of the hypogeum. The majority of sherds are not fragments of house utensils or funeral jars, but of a peculiarly shaped vases used possibly

as lamps and hung all about the place. Almost all the vases found, in fact, are provided with string-holes of various sizes which render probable this supposition.

As already stated, the hypogeum was found swamped with water which filled all the caves of the lower storey and some of the caves and galleries of the upper storey as well.

It appears, however, that the rain water found its way in considerable amount only of late, and that originally, the whole place was dry throughout the whole year. Nearly all the caves, passages, and chambers contained old deposit varying from a few centimeters to over one metre deep.

In the upper stories, modern material was found, mostly thrown in quite recent times; some of the material, however, was undoubtedly over a century old as not far from the original entrance a coin of Grand Master Pinto (1741-1773) was found very near the surface.

The modern material was easily recognized and of no interest whatever.

Under this, a dark compact deposit was found which showed nowhere signs of having been disturbed.

In this old deposit no stratification was observed and in caves which were cleared inch by inch, the deposit was always of the same type and contained objects of the same quality

The deposit of the large caves, about a metre in depth, was made of the red earth one finds in our fields and in this, bones and potsherds were intimately mixed.

This deposit was wanting in the series of caves which are elaborately cut and finished, and in the small caves in the lower storey.

Buried bones

As a general proposition we may say that the deposit of the caves is not the result of human habitation. The contents of the deposit point rather to a burial place in which the bodies were laid or heaped mostly as skeletons. Very few bodies were found lying in a natural position and no special arrangements such as trenches, sepulchres, stone enclosures etc. were met with, anywhere, intended to receive a body.

The human bones are found strewn about out of their natural position.

The damp state of the deposit in the two lower storeys, did not allow the first excavators to pay much attention to the state of the bones buried in the same. Later on, however, we were able to go most minutely into the matter and the heaping of skeletons in the caves became quite evident.

A detailed account of the excavation of a small portion of a cave not far from the original entrance, made in June 1909, will give a clear idea of the state of things.

Cave *C* 28 is 7.32 m. long, 3.35 m. wide at its middle portion, and 2.62 m. high. The deposit was 1 m. thick on an average, the floor stratum being concave, that is a few centimetres higher along the line of the walls.

The deposit was compact but not very damp and bones and pottery, very friable at times, could be easily freed by means of a fine-pointed instrument.

A portion of this deposit 3.17 m. long, 1.22 m. wide and 91 cms. high, was marked out and cleared with the utmost care, inch by inch.

As some of the material in the cave had to be removed beforehand, at one end of the cave, it was possible to clear a vertical section of the deposit down to the rock.

The section was examined carefully the deposit being scarped with a fine instrument; every bone met with was followed and its relation to other bones on all sides noted.

The material obtained from every 10 cubic cms. of deposit was taken up to dry in the sun on a separately marked area.

When the material was quite dry, after about four days of exposure to the sun, it was passed through sieves and all the objects found sorted and put aside.

That no objects were lost by this method was clear when hundreds of beads made out of shells, only a few millimiters in diameter, were collected and threaded.

The question then came of trying to determine the number of skeletons heaped in that space in which not a single one was found lying with bones in position.

Clavicles, knee-pans, heel bones and first vertebrae were separated as representative bones which were more likely to remain whole and be easily recognisable. As a matter of fact, the bone that was best preserved was the patella. The long bones, the skulls, and even the bones above mentioned, were often so friable as to be easily broken by the least handling.

On measuring the bones in the 39 cubic ms. of deposit examined, not less than 5.18 cubic ms. of bones were obtained, measured roughly in a cubic box, 1 ft. high.

From this mass of bones the following were set apart:

clavicles	40		
heel bones	40	(right)	28 (left)
first vertebrae	24		
right patellae	119		
left do	119		
doubtful do	5		

It is quite reasonable, therefore, to come to the conclusion that at least 120 skeletons were buried in a space of 3.17 by 1.2 by 1 m.

This is enough to show that a regular interment was out of the question as not more than 12 bodies could be laid in such a limited space.

The bones were of persons of different ages but mostly of adults.

Although attempts were made to preserve the skulls met with, by filling them with plaster of Paris, very few were obtained whole from this cave.

From other drier portions of the hypogeum a number of skulls were obtained which shall be studied and reported upon later on.

In cave (*C*) 28, not far from the spot of which the excavation was described, a complete skeleton was found, 51 cms. below the earth surface and 33 cms. above the rock.

The skeleton is that of a male adult and lies on its right side in a slightly contracted position, the head resting on the right arm with forearm bent downwards. The right arm is slightly extended and the forearm bent at an acute angle; the hand is bent also at a level with the head.

The skeleton, which was left in situ, does not lie in a trench but is buried in the red soil among bones strewn around and upon it.

No flints or vases were found near this skeleton.

The potsherds found at this spot are similar to those found in the other caves of the hypogeum and some of the sherds fitted other bits found in caves far away.

No difference whatever could be observed between the different strata of the deposit, and the same quality of sherds were found at the surface, at the bottom and in the space between.

Pottery

The pottery, with a few exceptions, was found in fragments. Thousands of sherds were obtained and several vases were reconstructed.

The pottery is typical of the eneolithic period and although some of the types found correspond to the pottery of late neolithic or eneolithic caves in Sicily, other types are quite new and cannot be compared with any pottery hitherto met with.

In the collection of potsherds made, we find a rough, light coloured ware. The ornamentation of this type of pottery consists chiefly of a kind of appliqué work of scales, feathers, discs etc. of the same material, which give to the vases a specially heavy appearance and which seem to exclude the probability of this kind of pottery having been used for domestic purposes.

The fine ware is black, drab or red in colour, incised or painted. The painting is red but the incised ornaments are often filled up with a red paste, easily removeable.

The designs consist mainly of graceful curves with hatched or punctured fillings.

Some of the potsherds found have more elaborate ornaments. A black plate, for instance, shows on its face an incised design of animals with long horns, long tails and spotted bodies.

The pottery found at Hal-Saflieni has been described and illustrated in a report by Prof. N. Tagliaferro, which will shortly be published.

Stone objects

Among the most important objects found in the hypogeum are several globular stones which vary in size, the largest having a diameter of 50 cms. Their purpose must have been religious as no other use can be made of similar objects.

The same may be said of the pillars which are mostly cylindrical and not highly finished.

A few hard-stone mallets have a cylindrical handle and a flat broad head; they are heavy and measure about 27 cms. in length. It is probable that they were stone cutter's tools.

Immediately outside the hypogeum, a great mass of sling stones was found neatly arranged in rows and hidden under a thin layer of hard mortar. A few of those stones were also found in the deposit of the hypogeum.

These stones have an elliptical section with tapering ends, and vary in length from 5 to 19 cms. Their weight varies from 35 to 652 grammes. They are made of the ordinary Maltese white building stone but some of them are of hard crystalline limestone.

A few are pierced at one end to admit a string.

Other stone objects, probably connected also with worship, are some discs, flat or slightly concave at one side and highly convex at the other side. Similar objects have been met with at Hagir Kim.

Other stones, which bear some resemblance to the latter, are conical in shape or rather cylindrical at the base with a conical end. They stand, generally, 17 cms. high, with a base 12 cms. wide.

One would expect to find among these objects numerous flint implements or bronze tools. Neither bronze nor any other metallic object was, however, met with in any part of the hypogeum. As to the flint instruments they were rather scanty and only flint flakes and scrapers have been found in a fair quantity.

Personal ornaments

The objects used as ornaments, found in Halsaflieni, are not different from those commonly met with in the prehistoric deposits of other countries.

They are small objects pierced at one or more points for use as pendants, such as are small sea shells, fossil teeth, clay beads, pebbles, and small cylindrical beads which were probably cut out of shells.

Very numerous are the pendants or votive axes made of fine, green, black or gray stones, triangular in shape, highly polished and of different size.

Buttons made from shells, with a convex surface and with two converging holes on the flat face are also numerous.

Figurines

Both animal and human clay figurines were found in the deposit.

The animal figurines represent both quadrupeds and birds and some of them are made from shells. Small fowls, dogs and pigs are common. The head of a tortoise, and a clay fish on a rectangular plate, provided with rockers, are remarkable.

The human figurines are of clay, except two which are cut in alabaster.

Some are naked and of the fat (steatopygous) type, already discovered at Hagiar Kim, and two are clothed. The latter are very interesting. One is broken and represents a clothed woman lying flat with the face down. The other one lies on her right side with the head resting on her arm. She is dressed in a wide skirt with flounces and looks far from archaic, although undoubtedly so. The bed on which she lies is also supported on rockers.

One of the alabaster figurines is 6 cms. high and is a perfect copy of a stone statuette discovered in a pit in one of the newly discovered caves.

This statuette is 40 cms. high and quite steatopygous in character. It represents a naked female stand-

ing. The feet are broken but the statuette is otherwise little damaged. It is headless but a socket is provided for the insertion of a head. Two stone heads were found along with this statuette, they are both furnished with a neck which fits well in the socket. These heads are very well worked and the hair is cleverly brought out. One of the heads has thick wavy hair like that of a medioeval page.

The statuette was originally painted red and the colour is clearly visible in nooks and in folds where it was protected from rough handling.

Animal bones

Mixed with the human remains, a few bones of domestic animals were found. These animals were of small size; very few bones of large animals, such as oxen, were met with.

Horns of sheep and probably of young bulls were found in the deposit; one pair of sheep's horns were found in a conical pit opposite the entrance of the innermost room. (*F*)

Two conical pits, about 20 cms. deep and 10 cms. apart are dug in the floor, in the room (*F*), opposite the left niche near the doorway. These two pits are connected, below the floor, with each other. They are covered by two conical plugs which fit closely and conceal the pits very cleverly. One of the pits was found empty and a pair of horns was found in the other.

Very remarkable is the fact that no sign of fire was found in any part of the hypogeum, no ashes, and no signs of a fire-place.

Only a few charred bones were found. Most of the long animal bones were purposely split, probably for extracting the marrow, as practiced elsewhere.

Both land and sea shells were found, though not in a very great quantity, when the enormous amount of deposit is taken into consideration.

So far, the following shells have been kindly determined by the Hon. Dr. Alf. Caruana Gatto.

Marine Shells:

Cypraea Lurida
Patella tarentina
,, lusitanica
Cardium rusticum
Tellina planata
Trochus Fragaroides
Venus verrucosa
Spondylus gaedaropus
Columbella rustica
Natica (?)

Land Shells:

Hyalina cellaria
Rumina decollata
Helix lenticula
,, caruanae
,, melitensis
,, vermiculata
,, aperta
Clausila bidens
Ferrussacia folliculus

It is important to note that bones and shells were found mixed in the deposit of the caves and no heaps of food remains were met with.

The absence of refuse heaps (*rifiuti di pasto*) of hearths, cinders, charcoal etc. within the hypogeum, seems to exclude the fact that these artificial caves were used for human dwellings. The lack of proper ventila-

tion in the deep caves is also a strong argument against the belief that the hypogeum was used as a dwelling place.

It is much more probable that the people who dug out the Halsaflieni hypogeum dwelt on the top of the hill in huts, of which the remains were met with, and that the hypogeum was in part used as a sanctuary in which religious ceremonies were conducted, and in part as a burial-place in which the bones of the dead were deposited after being deprived of the flesh (*scarnitura*).

Another conjecture we can also reasonably deduct from the enormous amount of bones accumulated in the hypogeum, quite out of proportion with the size of any dwelling centre in the neighbourhood. The thousands and thousands of bodies, massed in these grottoes, might well represent the population not of the Halsaflieni dwellings or of the neighbouring villages of Kortin (Corradino), but of all the neolithic villages of Malta.

This supposition is rendered more probable if we keep in mind that no prehistoric tombs were ever met with in Malta, although megalithic buildings are numerous and very extensive.

A detailed report, fully illustrating the objects found at Hal-Saflieni, will be published later on when the material shall be further arranged and studied.

All the objects discovered are, meanwhile, exhibited in the Valletta Museum.

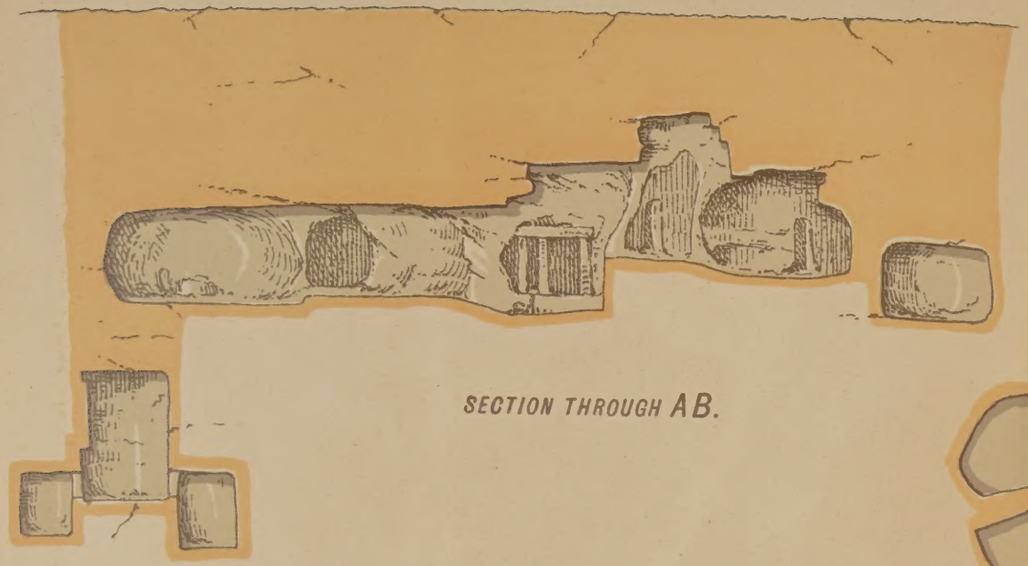
The plans and sections published with this report were drawn by Mr. Nicola Vassallo, late of the Public Works Department, from measurements made by himself and from the survey made by Mr. Antonio Doublet of the P. W. D.; the work of the latter, done under considerable difficulty, deserves a special commendation.

Mr. Vincenzo Busuttil and Mr. Giuseppe Pace, P.A.A. both of the P.W.D., should also be mentioned in connection with these excavations; Mr. Busuttil drew excellent plans and sketches of the place and Mr. Pace superintended the removal of the material and skilfully adopted all sorts of contrivances to render the excavation possible under difficult circumstances.

"HAL SAFLIENI" HYPOGEUM

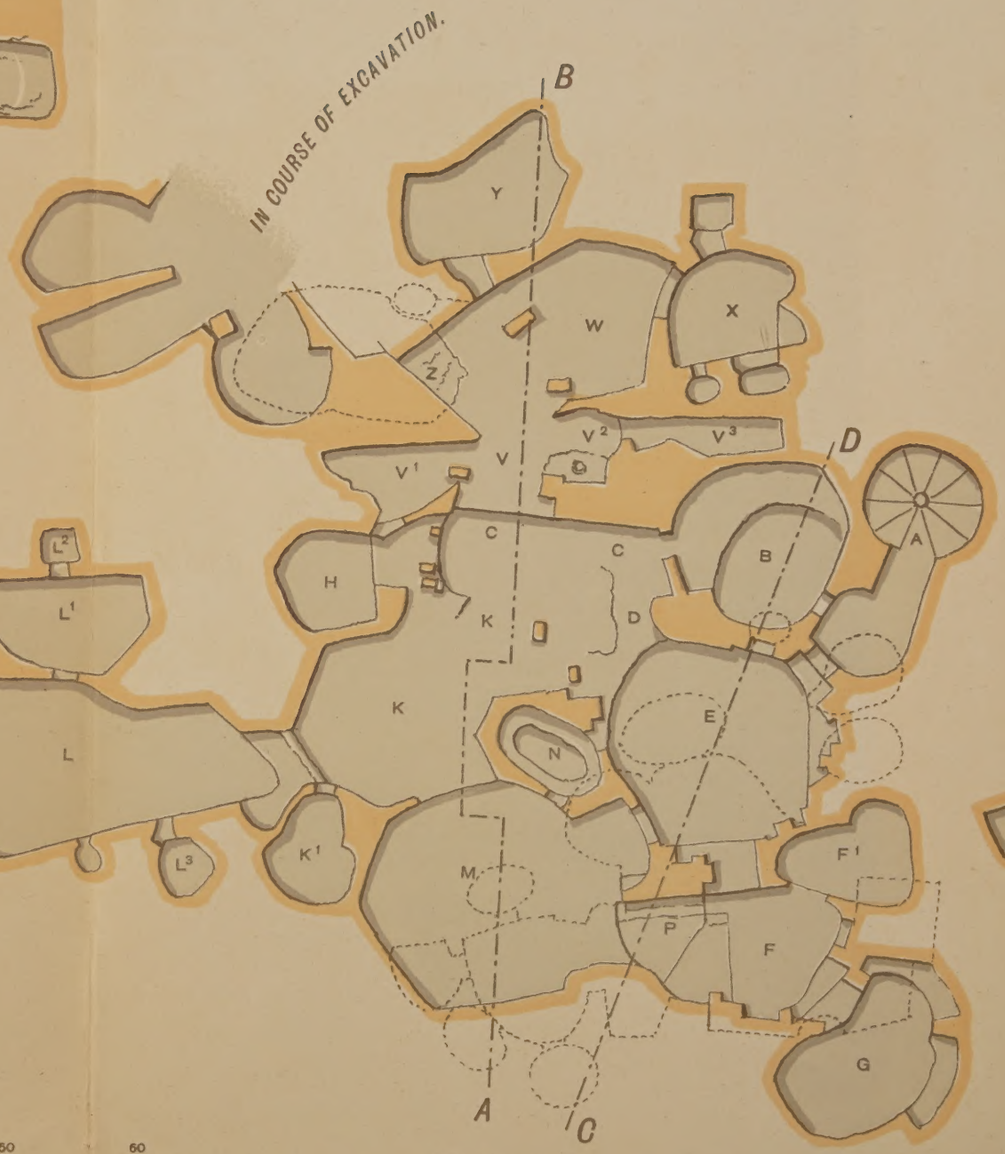
NORTH LIMITS OF "HAL TARXIEN"

DISCOVERED IN 1902.

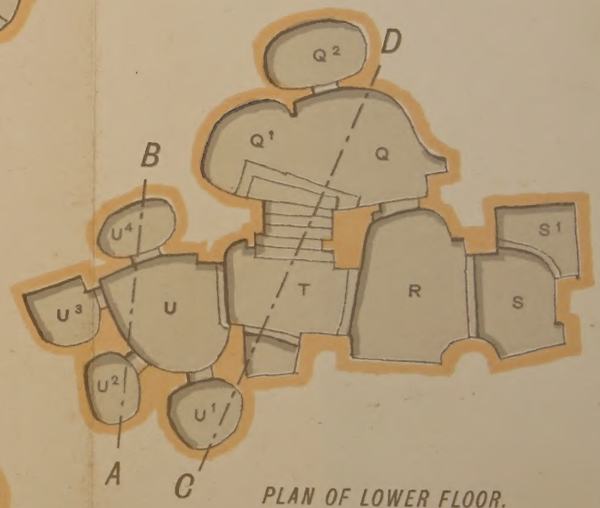


SECTION THROUGH AB.

SECTION THROUGH CD.



GENERAL PLAN.



PLAN OF LOWER FLOOR.

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 FEET.

LIT. BONAVIA-MALTA.